

Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting

May 24, 2012

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, One East

DRAFT, June 12, 2012

AGENDA TOPICS

- Introduction of new EAG members
- Management updates
- Role of the EAG moving forward

MEETING SUMMARY

1) Management Update

Budget issues continue to be a concern, Pier noted that the lab must go through another reduction in force of approximately 80 positions. The voluntary portion is closing today, with about 33 applications in hand thus far. It will need to be assessed whether everyone who applied is eligible and the remaining need will have to be accomplished through an involuntary program.

The need to cut staff positions is determined by evaluating the overall available budget and the capital needed to build new projects and facilities. We must invest capital to prepare for the future or we will be going down the wrong path. For example, all funds for the liquid argon test facility construction come from the existing budget. Overall, Pier noted that he is optimistic that we have a great program at Fermilab. It is impressive what we are building up in Minnesota, the telescope in Chile, work at SNOLAB, Minerva, there are a lot of very strong programs.

The lab has been planning for the LBNE project to build a new beamline to Homestake Mine in South Dakota. Planning large projects at a time when the country is broke is very difficult. DOE has basically said that LBNE is too big to handle in the current budget, and OMB is holding the line. The \$1.2 billion base cost plus a 40% contingency and escalation for outyear money makes it a \$2 billion project. However, it is also clear that DOE does not want to kill it completely, so it is being redesigned in a phased approach. There are three alternatives being developed at about a third of the cost, all of which do important physics. Once the alternatives are prepared, the lab will engage DOE in a discussion of which direction to take.

Pier believes that Fermilab will get DOE support and ultimately construct Project X. Project X is another \$2 billion project and again will be broken up into phases. If they are sufficiently ambitious, the world will support these projects longer term. For example, we expect India to provide substantial in-kind contributions to experiments

here. This strategic relationship is very important to the country. Pier is optimistic that the LBNE project will be resolved and then the lab will need to get to work on Project X. We are also about to go to CD1 for the Mu2e experiment. CD1 is required in order to access to the next pot of money in the FY12 budget.

What happened to the Tevatron resources, hadn't DOE said the lab would be able to reallocate those? Overall our funding has gone down. Without a defined project it is harder to defend the budget. The lab budget will decrease \$25 million for next year, including all the ILC budget plus the LBNE reductions. There is just a lot of resistance to large projects right now. The overall Administration strategy has resulted in real changes to the President's budget to Congress, OMB has provided significant increases in some areas and cuts in other areas like particle physics. However, when it gets to Congress they eliminate the increases and accept the cuts. Then working within continuing resolutions makes it even harder to manage, as it is not clear when and what level budgets will be approved and no new starts can occur. In January, we will see a 10% cuts across the board by law unless that law is changed, and to do that both sides will need to agree.

Is private funding an option? It is possible but very difficult, and we are talking about large sums of money in order to make a difference. Most private donations go to educational institutions. Government is forbidden from augmenting funding, so there are a lot of hoops to jump through to even accept the money. The lab cannot solicit money on government time. The best source of additional funding is the State, and we did get \$20 million to help fund IARC.

Bruce Chrisman noted that safety statistics are down at the lab and lots of new changes are coming down the road from DOE regarding travel and other expenses. OMB has made a rule that no conference will go forward that costs more than \$500,000 based on the issue raised from the GSA conference in Las Vegas, anything over \$100,000 requires Deputy Secretary approval. Lots of new rules and regulations are coming down. Rules are getting more and more intrusive and this is impacting the lab's ability to do its work and have control over its budget. There is also a NAPA study (National Academy for Public Administration) on the lab's interaction with DOE that could impact future.

Katie Yurkewicz announced that the Office of Communication has hired a person to take on a new full-time internal communication position. This position was created in part due to much of the input from the EAG. She starts June 11 and will likely work directly with the EAG. Her name is Deb Sebastian and she brings a lot of internal communication experience.

The Fermilab Documentary team came back a few weeks ago to shoot some new portions of the video in response to input from EAG and others. She is also working to understand how to best handle announcements of retirements from the lab. In the past, they did quite an extensive profile on all retirees but the number of current retirees makes this less practical. EAG members noted that total lack of acknowledgement

would be a problem, pictures are important to recognize the person, people do appreciate the news and would like to see something in Fermilab Today. Pier asked if retirement recognition is an issue lab-wide regarding morale or is it working ok at the local level. In general, this is being handled well locally, does not require any real intervention.

2) Role of the EAG Moving Forward

New members asked how they should let people know that they are on the EAG. It is important to make sure that managers know and can share that in meetings, but also very important to go face-to-face and let people know, that is the best way to get folks to provide input. Also take ideas back to your groups and see what other people think. Think about what makes sense in your area, but we are all responsible for keeping in touch with our peers about issues being discussed at the EAG.

The EAG engaged in a general discussion about the state of the lab. In particular, how we all need to learn how to deal with the “new normal” of ongoing budget crises and project uncertainty moving forward. The world around us has changed, and we need to determine how we get ourselves to a place that we learn as an organization how to work and manage ourselves through these kinds of situations, and how we adjust to the fact that we are just in a new normal.

There is a general sense at the lab of waiting to exhale. We are all being asked to do more with less. People are waiting to understand if this is really the new normal, especially for people who have been here for a long time. People really are waiting for all of this to get better and get back to the old normal. This was widely acknowledged as true. But it was also pointed out that there are many folks who are new to the lab, who have a long term career ahead of them and need to understand how they fit in.

Reactions to ongoing changes are different based on how long people have been at the lab, some of the newer folks really worry about whether this is where they should stay, while longer term folks are more resilient but waiting for things to get back to normal. However, with all the older folks leaving or retiring, we do need to be in a position to attract and retain younger folks. In the past, lots of folks stayed because of the passion for the science and because they like working here. That may no longer be as true or compelling for the younger generation.

Morale is a multi-prong issue, older employees keep looking at what used to be, newer folks actually see this as how it is, and wonder when older folks will move on to create more opportunities. The big problem is just that people don't know, who makes the decisions on who stays and goes. Some younger ones never expect to stay a long time.

Employees would like to see good news more frequently. What will be the policy once the pay-freeze is lifted? The two-year freeze is ending October 1, 2013. The challenge will be whether there is any new money to handle raises, as that increase has to be paid

for in some way. It is not clear yet what DOE will allow labs to do. Originally, the direction noted that there would be no provisions to “catch up” to the market. Some EAG members noted that until this pay freeze issue is resolved it will be very difficult to deal with culture issues at the lab.

The lab used to have a lot more interaction among groups and departments, now it all seems organized on a need to know basis, and has become an us vs. them atmosphere. There is no socializing or networking. People used to feel more part of the overall program. Now, there is less attention to people’s role in the bigger picture. Lots of silos, often driven by budget, lack of willingness to support, work together, and everything requires a time code, so there is a great deal less flexibility in working together.

One way EAG members can help is just being visible, meeting people. There are a lot of disconnects in the system, how do we make everything more real and personal?

ACTION: It was agreed that EAG members would work to pay more attention over the next month of what culture existed in their areas, and how people talked about the lab and their roles at the lab in preparation for the meeting in June.

REMAINING 2012 MEETING DATES

Meetings are currently scheduled for the following Thursdays

All meetings 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

- June 28 – 1 East
- July 26 - Comitium
- August 23 - Comitium
- September 27 - Comitium
- October 25 - Comitium
- November 15 - Comitium
- December 20 - Comitium